



## The 15th Garden - Supporting Food Sovereignty in Syria



Em Mustafa gardening in the camp where she has been displaced for five years



Farming project in the Kurdish areas



Camps for displaced people in Lebanon



Rooftop corn farm



Urban farm on a Mosque in Aleppo

For many participants' urban farming also served as a place maker and as a tool to reclaim old identities in displacement. Place making is often done by conducting activities similar to those carried out in life pre-displacement. Syria has and will have a large number of internally displaced persons over the next decade. Could the recent urban farming development in the country benefit displaced people?

### The 15th Garden Movement

The 15th Garden network is a movement within Syria - but what can we do to support from outside? The 15th Garden has solidarity and support both within the region and from initiatives in Europe. European groups in Germany, France, Greece, Italy and Sweden have been collecting organic non-hybrid seeds to people in besieged cities. Skills workshops and info events are organised, throughout Europe and as of this year part of the network has created a seed bank and a vocational training center in Lebanon available for displaced Syrian farmers.

Information on the urban farmers' movement in Syria is hard to access for non-Arabic speakers and we believe it is important to make available the data and resources on the topic that we have collected since the start of the uprising. We would also like to learn from other movements and explore new ways of supporting the Syrian people in their struggle for self-determination and within that - food sovereignty.

### Urban Farming in besieged cities

Nearly 1,000,000 Syrians suffering under siege in locations in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs, Deir Ezzor, and Idlib governorates. An additional 1,300,000 additional people live in areas which face siege-like conditions and are at risk of becoming completely besieged.

The Syrian regime has used food and starvation as a weapon against its own people and have purposely targeted fields, markets and water reservoirs when bombing liberated areas. A direct effect of the sieges has been syrian activists exploring new ways of feeding their community without being dependent on the Assad-regime or armed militias - one solution has been organic, urban farming and it is from these initiatives the 15th Garden was formed.

Syrian agriculture has historically been heavily state controlled and highly dependent on industrial pesticides and fertilizers. For areas that wish to be independent from the regime - organic agriculture has proven a useful method for feeding a community without dependency on on state or the market.

Previous research on urban farming inspired projects in Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon conducted by the network has shown indications of participants not only gaining extra nutrition and income by farming in their settlements.



The classroom for Syrian farmers in Lebanon



Urban farmland in a Palestinian Camp in Damascus



The 15th Garden is a bottom-up network of urban gardens in cities that have been bombed, besieged and blocked in Syria. The network includes family gardens, farmers in rural areas, and agriculture initiatives in refugee camps in neighbouring states. The network has developed fast during the past years. The involved farmers, gardeners and activists are not willing to stay passive while what they call the biggest humanitarian disaster of recent history is taking place. The farmers' movement with its practical skills is ready to stand by all the people who are affected by the war.